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The CIA said stay out

Whatever the outcome of the publication by *The New York Times* of a secret documentary on the American presence in Indochina may be in the light of the granting of a temporary federal court injunction sought on the ground that the law had been violated, one thing already is very clear. That is, the role ascribed by its critics to the Central Intelligence Agency as the evil genius of U.S. involvement proves to be more myth than reality.

The fact is the record now revealed shows that the CIA warned against deeper involvement as early as November, 1964. In describing the attitude of the intelligence community, the *Times* says the study shows the people involved "tended toward a pessimistic view."

An intelligence panel composed of members of the three leading agencies—the CIA, the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and the Defense (Department's) Intelligence Agency—ordered to study a Joint Chief's recommendation that North Vietnam be bombed into surrender, concluded that there was no "strong chance of breaking Hanoi's will."

"The course of actions the Communists have pursued in South Vietnam over the past few years implies a fundamental estimate on

their part that the difficulties facing the U.S. are so great that U.S. will and ability to maintain resistance in that area can be gradually eroded—without running high risks that this would wreak heavy destruction on the D.R.V. (Hanoi) or Communist China," the panel said. "... We do not believe that such actions (large-scale bombing of industry) would have a crucial effect on the daily lives of the overwhelming majority of the North Vietnam population ..."

In April, 1965, John McCone, then head of the CIA, warned against plans to undertake combat operations on the ground against Viet Cong guerrillas without commensurate increase in bombing of North Vietnam; in short, we cannot win cheaply and to win at all we must go all out.

"In effect, we will find ourselves mired down in combat in the jungle in a military effort that we cannot win, and from which we will have extreme difficulty extricating ourselves."

These advices are hardly what one would expect from an organization so many believe is at the bottom of all our overseas adventures. In fact, instead of urging the U.S. to escalate the war, the CIA was warning the U.S. not to increase our commitment. It ran up the danger flags, and acted as responsibly as its harshest critics could have hoped it would.